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THE SITUATION IN BURUNDI

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fiftieth year

Letter dated 7 April 1995 from the Permanent Representative of Burundi to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

As you will have noted, in recent days the international press has been dwelling on the security situation in Burundi. The media have zealously vied with each other to depict what some wrongly regard as an inexorable deterioration of the situation to the point that they predict that Burundi will soon find itself engulfed by the strife experienced by Rwanda.

I should hereby like to bring the following to your attention, with a view to informing the international community about the disruption of security and peace currently observed in Burundi and about the measures taken to deal with it.

1. The decline of the situation which we have observed during the month of March 1995 is the consequence of repeated provocations and attacks by Hutu militia and gangs against the positions of the forces of law and order and against the Tutsi civilian population targeted. The specialized services of the Government of Burundi have discovered that certain meetings were held on 11 and 18 March 1995 to prepare and coordinate attacks carried out in the capital. These meetings were led by people recognized by the intelligence services as subversive elements of the Parti pour la libération du peuple Hutu (PALIPEHUTU) (an illegal organization) on the spot in Bujumbura.

2. It is also a logical consequence of the illegal distribution of arms to young Hutu by political leaders who have not concealed the fact. For instance, Mr. Léonard Nyangoma, former Minister of the Interior and of Public Security, currently President of the so-called Conseil national pour la défense

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de la démocratie (National Council for the Defence of Democracy) (CNDD) and its military branch, known as the Forces pour la défense de la démocratie (Forces for the Defence of Democracy), other illegal criminal organizations to which other assailants claim to belong today. The statements made by the leaders of CNDD over foreign radio channels clearly attest to the fact that it is they who are actively contributing to the situation of widespread insecurity in the country. They declare that their objective is to dismantle the army of Burundi and overthrow the present institutions established under the Convention on Governance signed on 10 September 1994.

3. Moreover, the young Tutsi in the capital have followed the bad example of the young Hutu in also seeking to acquire arms. Noting that the Tutsi were chased from their hills in the interior of the country in October-November 1993 and from certain districts under the Bujumbura local authorities, they have, in turn, proceeded to engage in ethnic cleansing in other districts, transforming residential working-class districts into veritable Hutu or Tutsi ethnic ghettos. From time to time they hurl grenades at the central market in Bujumbura to harass the Hutu who have come down from the capital's foothills (to which the Hutu militia of Kamenge withdraw whenever they are pursued by the forces of law and order), but also to pillage and steal. These young Tutsi sometimes benefit from the tolerance of some elements of the forces of law and order. It should perhaps be remembered that the families of the military left in the interior of the country were, in October-November 1993, the primary target of the gangs which committed large-scale ethnic massacres. That situation could probably be the underlying cause of these reprehensible acts. However, whenever an instance of lack of discipline is detected, the person responsible is imprisoned, to suffer the rigour of the military law and regulations. Today several dozen members of the military are incarcerated for this reason.

4. The long crisis which the country has been undergoing for several months has generated a certain distrust among the various elements of the Burundi nation, some of which are evolving in an atmosphere in which reason often yields to passion. The Tutsi are afraid of being wiped out altogether and recall with horror the massacres in Burundi in October-November 1993 and the recent genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. The Hutu believe that the Tutsi, helped by the "Tutsi-dominated" army, are going to avenge their kin who were massacred in 1993. They seek to destabilize the national army, which they regard as the bastion of the Tutsi. This tension promotes radicalism on both sides.

5. In the face of this situation, the Government of the Republic of Burundi has made a return to peace and security the top priority. In a joint declaration on 30 March 1995, the President of the Republic, Mr. Sylvestre Ntibantunganya, and the Prime Minister, Mr. Antoine Nduwayo, solemnly committed themselves, before the Burundi nation, to secure the peace and security for which the nation thirsts. They proposed to all their partners - political parties and social and occupational organizations - that, for a period of three years, the priority objective should be peace, national reconciliation and the reconstruction of the country. Starting on 25 March 1995, the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister decided to preside over weekly meetings of the security services to promote the rapid adoption of the decisions on security which are required.

6. In his 25 March 1995 message to the nation on the security situation in the country, the President of the Republic took the initiative of devoting the month of April 1995 to a vast campaign for restoring peace to the country. In presenting the Government's plan of action on 29 March 1995, the Prime Minister announced that in order to ensure its success, members of the Government, representatives of the people, recognized political parties, the different associations of civil society, including associations representing natives of each administrative entity, and of course national and local government authorities would participate in the campaign. Outreach to such participants has already begun.

7. In parallel with this public awareness campaign designed to restore peace, senior Government authorities have decided to:

- systematically pursue the disarmament of all those who are holding weapons illegally, using appropriate means and ensuring strict respect for human rights;

- take action against all those who are attempting to destabilize the nation;

- protect the men and women of Burundi against any attack on their security, no matter what its origin or who perpetrates it;

- create conditions conducive to the reintegration of displaced persons and the return of refugees;

- resume national economic and social development efforts, particularly in the areas of education, health and agriculture.

8. To this end, the Government of Burundi has already launched a series of actions, which include the following:

(a) Organizing the return of Burundi nationals and foreigners who fled districts of the capital city where there were disturbances and took refuge in Uvira (Republic of Zaire);

(b) Alerting people who have remained in those districts, which for the time being are deserted, to watch over the safety of property left behind by those who fled;

(c) Proposing to the competent bodies the creation of a specialized administration for some communes (including areas under the Bujumbura local authorities) and provinces where disturbances have been particularly acute, in order to break the vicious circle of violence;

(d) Dealing severely with gangs of Hutu and Tutsi terrorists in the city of Bujumbura. Several dozens of them are already in prison;

(e) Continuing to track down and neutralize the warmongers who are sowing terror in the country's north-east. Since March 1995, Burundi has been at war with the so-called "Intagoheka" (those who do not close their eyes) armed gangs,

allied to the PALIPEHUTU, who are obviously being supported by the infamous Interahamwe militias and by the former armed forces of Rwanda;

(f) Organizing the upcoming national debate on the country's basic problems (restructuring of the defence and security forces, guarantees for the inalienable exercise of the rights of minorities, effective enjoyment of human rights for all, etc.). The national technical commission responsible for preparing this debate is already at work.

9. The international community must vigorously condemn the aggressors who have chosen to impose war on Burundi's population. It must denounce with increasing firmness the destabilizers on all sides who are undermining the fragile process of national reconciliation set in motion by Burundi's coalition Government. It should not underestimate the pernicious impact of the unholy alliance between certain Burundi militias and those responsible for the destruction of the Rwandese nation.

10. Instead of engaging in conjecture and envisaging solutions that do not have the support of the political partners in Burundi, the country's friends would do well to propose specific assistance activities in the areas agreed by the United Nations General Assembly (see resolutions 49/7, para. 4, and 49/21 C).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter distributed as a document of the General Assembly, under item 26 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

Accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

(Signed) Tharcisse NTAKIBIRORA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative